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In her article, the author proposes to address the psychic 'work' of the moving image by aligning it with aspects of post-Bionian psychoanalytic theories that allude to virtual spaces as sites of reverie that, in enabling pre-linguistic 'feelings' to find expression, might produce shifts in thinking about disturbing or traumatic conditions and experiences. Her approach to psychoanalytic theory and the moving image is tested out in relation to one case study: Jeamin Cha's artists' film Sound Garden (2019), a film that refers to practices of counselling engaged in by four female protagonists who, on the soundtrack, reflect on their work and well-being in the context of neoliberalism in South Korean institutions.

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From "Lure" to "Cure". From Critical Spectatorship to a Relational Space of Reverie

Introduction

As an art and moving image theorist, my inculcation into the interdisciplinary field of art and psychoanalysis in the late 1980s was dominated by Jacques Lacan's re-reading of Freud's oeuvre, whereby the image was considered as a lure, a deception.[1] This idea was not new to Western thought: in ancient philosophy, Plato considered the image as being a veil to (transcendental) truth. Lacan's psychoanalytic gloss on the image as a lure was quickly taken up in the 1970s and 1980s by film and media theorists, in cogent critiques of images in commodity and capitalistic consumer culture. Images were deemed to promote the latter's illusions of desire and power, while the film apparatus itself facilitated the incorporation of the viewer into this delusory space of interpellation and seduction.[2]

These ideas are not the focus of this article; however, I shall briefly return to them in the case study in Part I of this essay. Although I will move away from this paradigm of image analysis, I mention it here at the outset to indicate why it continues to leave traces on my proposition of the reparative effects of screen images. Rather than simply affirming the positive role of the image in/as art therapy, I proffer a critical therapeutics in which the image is both beneficent and toxic at the same time, not because of its ontology, but because images are social, and the social is always a site of contestation between and/or within individuals and groups. Images do not resolve social or individual conflicts, but they might enable their audiences to engage with ideas that would otherwise be disavowed or felt as too overwhelming. In Part II of this essay, I will engage with one moving image case study, Jeamin Cha's *Sound Garden* (2019),

a 29-minute experimental documentary artists' film that addresses such overwhelming themes as the psychological stress of immaterial labor and the ethos of overproduction in globalized capitalist economies. My proposition is that the film *acts* on these issues by engendering, through its rhythms and flows of speech and images, a space in which the contradictions of living under such economic structures can be simultaneously entertained rather than denied or fixed as oppressive. This is its therapeutics. In my analysis of this space, I will adapt relational psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin's concept of "thirdness," which is an analytic modality that attempts to bypass the either/or of complementary subject positions. Rather than the latter, whereby one subject may feel overwhelmed by another's demands, or feels helpless in relation to another's power over them, including the power to do harm, Benjamin's model of "thirdness" conceives of the analytic encounter as an expanded space of reverie that flows between bodies which, while being in an asymmetrical relationship with one another, are mutually vulnerable and co-creative.

Before I elaborate on this notion in relation to Cha's film, I want to explicate a historical case study which acts as a hinge between my Lacanian inculcation into the interdisciplinary field of art and psychoanalysis and my turn to relational models of intersubjectivity to consider spectatorship. While addressing a different kind of medium, i.e. a photographic installation by the British-American artist Mary Kelly, Parveen Adams' 1991 essay "The Art of Analysis: Mary Kelly's *Interim* and the Discourse of the Analyst" is a significant precedent in psychoanalytically-inspired art criticism making claims for an artwork acting *as* an analytic site – the artist/artwork duo being *like* an analyst, while the spectator is *like* an analysand. Adams overtly claims that the encounter with Kelly's artwork *Interim* (1982–1986) is akin to going to analysis, because the work opens up a space where

a new (feminist) subject might come into being beyond the signifiers of femininity in patriarchal capitalistic culture. This case study introduces the idea that *analysis without an analyst* can be enacted in the intermediate space between viewer and image. And while it is not a focus of Adams' argument, it is worth noting, given my emphasis on moving image in Part II, that Kelly's interest in creating a diegetic installation space was informed by film[3] – in the expanded field of the pictorial, the viewer's peripatetic movement from one image to the next effects a phenomenological process of montage. Although my aim is not to compare or contrast these works, another tangential connection between them is that both feature interviews with women which the artists undertook as part of their research: in Kelly's case, middle-aged Anglo-American women; in Cha's case, Korean women who work as counsellors. While my focus in Part II will be on how Cha's experimental film could be said to model a relational space of "thirdness" between image and viewer, my introductory case study marks a historical shift in the use of psychoanalytic frameworks to conceive of spectatorship.

Part I: a Lacanian case study

In "The Art of Analysis: Mary Kelly's *Interim* and the Discourse of the Analyst," Adams makes an analogy between the spectator's encounter with Kelly's installation *Interim* (1982–1986) and the formalization of the analysand in analysis, claiming that:



Installation view of Mary Kelly, "Corpus," Vielmetter Los Angeles, September 3 – October 15, 2022 Courtesy of the artist, Vielmetter Los Angeles, and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York Photo credit: Jeff McLane

> the fundamental situation of *Interim*—that of the series, the spectator, the art work, and the fantasy of whatever goes under the name of Mary Kelly—finds

> its analogue in the analytic situation. I am suggesting that going to the exhibition is like going to analysis. Of course one is not a substitute for the other; I am not suggesting that you choose between going to analysis and going to see *Interim*. But I do think that the relation of transference helps to clarify what is going on in *Interim* especially where the exhibition confronts that most delicate of issues, that of ways of going on.[4]

Adams doesn't explicate the expression "ways of going on," but her reading implies that it means how to reinvent existence in the face of the dismantling of the illusions one might have used to prop up one's life prior to analytic encounter. The Lacanian psychoanalytic framework used here involves liberating the viewer from attachment to the specular image and its ideological truth-effects. Although Adams does not use the term "therapeutic," it could be said that the therapeutic work of the art image in this framework is to expose the hollowness of the ideological formations of identity. Such exposure might open the subject/spectator up to its own "truth" – to new desires rather than being subjected to socially prescriptive ones. For Adams, *Interim* effects this process in the spectator. How so?

Interim is comprised of four sections, *Corpus*, *Pecunia*, *Historia*, and *Potestas*. The section Adams props her argument on is *Corpus* (1984–1985), which consists of photographic positives of five pieces of clothing laminated on plexiglass, with each item – a leather jacket, a shirt, a negligee, a pair of shoes, and a bag – being presented in three sequential poses: folded, unfolded, and knotted (alluding to French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot's classifications of the bodily contortions of hysterical patients in his clinic at Salpêtrière). Each sartorial image in the sequence is accompanied by an image of a hand-written text silk-screened on plexiglass, the installation comprising thirty images in total. Adams describes how the items of clothing in *Corpus*, as an effect of the photo-laminate process, hover like ghostly

apparitions rather than bodily presences, her claim being that the images signify an absent body that, moreover, is felt as absent within the work. Faced with this absence, the viewer may look to the texts for consolation; however, here too, their desire for identification becomes undone. The narratives in the texts, while written in the first-person, are based on material gathered by Kelly from numerous interviews with women, a factor that, rather than offering a stable point of identification within the work, serves to exaggerate the signifiers of femininity within patriarchy to such an extent that the (female) viewer might begin to feel her subjection to them. In making an analogy between the encounter with this artwork and psychoanalysis, Adams claims that, in the process of encountering the hollowness of these signifiers, the viewer confronts an emptiness beyond the image, i.e. beyond their narcissistic desire for self-affirmation. Exposing the fiction of these signifiers of subjection, which are both oppressive and perversely pleasurable – a woman may enjoy her subjection to the dictates of fashion and appearance – *Corpus* dismantles these ideological props of desire. For Adams, this limit of the symbolic is represented in the work through the "notion of an apparition [...] which is both sublime and horrible [and] silent, being outside signification."[5] Adams relates this horrible vacuity to the silence of the (Lacanian) analyst in analysis.



Detail view of Mary Kelly, "Corpus: Meancé," Vielmetter Los Angeles, September 3 – October 15, 2022 Courtesy of the artist, Vielmetter Los Angeles, and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York Photo credit: Jeff McLane

In theory at least, Adams' art critical analysis replicates the conclusion of a Lacanian psychoanalysis, which involves the dissolution of the transference, i.e. the idealization of the analyst by the analysand, and, in shattering this love attachment, exposes the analysand to the empty core of being at the heart of the subject. Adams phrases it thus: "The spectator realizes that signifiers are wanting; there is something that is not yet signified. In this sense, *Interim* points to the absence behind identity."[6] The process of dissolving the transference is triggered by the analyst's transformation from being perceived as an idealized subject who knows the truth to becoming a pathetic object who exposes his/her failure. Framing her analysis through Lacan's four discourses of knowledge production,[7] Adams proposes that *Corpus* operates like the discourse of the analyst, which produces the subject beyond knowledge: the art installation provides "the setting for the discourse of the analyst, a discourse that structures the conditions under which questions and answers circulate."[8] The question in this case is: "What do women want?" and Adams' claim is that, unlike Lacan's three other discourses (of the university, the master, and the hysteric), the fall from idealization taken by the analyst redirects the analysand's demand for, or resistance to, an answer to this question, shifting them into a space of production where new (feminist) desires might come into being.



Detail view of Mary Kelly, "Corpus: Meancé," Vielmetter Los Angeles, September 3 – October 15, 2022 Courtesy of the artist, Vielmetter Los Angeles, and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York Photo credit: Jeff McLane

There is much more to Adams' text, but for my purposes here it does two things. One, it speculates on how an artwork might act as an analytic setting, i.e. how its spectatorial space might propose a psychic reorientation of desire. In this, the text acts as an important precedent for the idea that art images might affect those therapeutics which are akin to psychoanalysis. And secondly, Adams' text could also be said to function as an example of what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick calls "paranoid criticism," an approach that "trust[s] in exposure"[9] as a tactic to liberate subjects from the dictates of ideological formations and attachments, here compulsory and commodified forms of femininity. In Adams' critical analysis, Kelly's ghostly images disabuse us of our desire for self-reflection in the (ideological) mirror of representation. She states:

> ...you may see yourself shadowed in the Plexiglas; but what is vivid is the image in which you cannot see yourself reflected, the image pushed to its limit, and the empty place of the object given at that limit. The mirror no longer adequately reflects; it produces as apparition the object that cannot be reflected in the mirror. A moment of blindness—the artist's analogue to the moment of the analyst's silence in the talking cure.[10]

Adams' account of separation from the image of representation finds echoes in psychoanalytic theorist Jacqueline Rose's 1986 allusion to the feminist material artistic

strategy of "blurring the field of representation where our normal forms of self-representation take place,"[11] Kelly's image-making could be said to expose what Rose calls "the fixed nature of sexual identity as a fantasy and, in the same gesture, to trouble, break up, or rupture the visual field before our eyes."[12] Though such "critical" practices continue today, their political effectivity has been questioned by theorists such as Sedgwick, who call for more reparative analyses than the paranoid "hermeneutics of suspicion and exposure"[13] that predominated in the 1970s, 80s, and early 90s. Sedgwick's foundational terms are adapted from Melanie Klein's theories of early infantile development in relation to the mother's body, i.e. the paranoid-schizoid phase in which the infant attacks that body, and the depressive (reparative) phase which engenders the desire to repair the damage wreaked, though both phases are imbricated in one another and continue into adult life. The turn to Klein in academia also figures in art history in the mid-1990s, especially Mignon Nixon's work on the sculptor Louise Bourgeois, which set out to counter "Lacanian-based feminist work of the 1970s and '80s that centered on investigations of pleasure and desire"[14] by using a Kleinian relational approach to materiality and affect. This trajectory has also occurred in feminist film studies. As Lisa Cartwright asserts, in the 1970s and 80s, "object relations and affect theory were spurned in favour of work on representation and language"[15] and a Lacanian-inspired emphasis on the linguistic-symbolic register of spectatorship. More recent scholarship in film studies has re-evaluated both object relations and affect theory, to consider the psychic importance of other registers of expression such as sound, gesture, and movement, both internal and external, as "routes through which affect functions both intrapsychically and intersubjectively in relationship to representation."[16] Rather than disabusing "supposedly naïve viewers of their ideological interpellation" as in

paranoid criticism, a more reparative criticism enables passionate attachments to the image to be revalued.[17]

Interlude: a Kristevan hinge between Parts I & II

This shift from Freudo-Lacanian psychoanalytical approaches to the image to relational ones is historically contingent on technology rather than mere fashion or trend. Blindness, the ghostly, the apparitional, and blurring are tropes that could be said to be synonymous with analog processes of image-making and their interpretation in terms of index and trace, presence and absence. In the digital era, images circulate as part of a dynamic affective field of interconnectivity,[18] rather than being a secondary presentation of a repressed fantasy or a copy of a numinous transcendental real. If psychoanalysis is to have a purchase on the consumption of art images in this altered field of production, it needs a less suspect view of the image as a lure or fantasy fetish. This is congruent with psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva's reflections on the changing nature of psychoanalytic practice in the twenty-first century. Although Kristeva does not veer from her allegiance to Freudian transference, her diagnosis of contemporary psychological illnesses such as depression and anxiety in relation to the "society of the spectacle"[19] leads her to posit what she encounters in the consulting room as a modern form of nihilism deriving from consumerism and the "society of performance and stress."[20] She claims that the experience of psychic life has been abandoned, its painful symptoms being soothed either with pharmaceuticals or televisual soap operas, domestic comedies, and crime dramas. For Kristeva, the world of mass media harnesses anxieties and desires such that "the psychic life of modern individuals wavers between somatic symptoms [...] and the visual depiction of their desires (daydreaming in front of the TV). In such a situation, psychic life is

blocked, inhibited, and destroyed."[21] Although she suggests that psychic wounds can be healed with images, for her, the "universe of the image that invades us through film and television: the cinematic image, the central place of the contemporary imaginary,"[22] leads to phantasmatic poverty and vacuity. Not only this, but the cinematic image also pacifies and appeases such that "calm reigns before images of hell."[23] However, the cinematic image can redeem itself from this spellbinding effect if it holds the spectator "at a distance from fascination."[24] Kristeva is not referring to moving image as an art form – as John Lechte says, "her theory was developed in a different era to the digital"[25] – but to auteur cinema such as the work of Jean-Luc Godard. In an analysis of Godard's procedure that resonates with Adams' analysis of Kelly, Kristeva states that his montage captures, cuts up, and arranges signals in such a way that "the phantasmatic thought of the writer-director can be made out and invites you first to locate your own fantasies and then *to hollow them out*" [my emphasis].[26] This is uncannily reminiscent of Adams' analysis of Kelly's work as emptying out the signifiers of femininity in patriarchal consumer capitalism. However, rather than the exposure of lack as in Adams' analysis, in a Kristevan pulverization of fantasy a connection to the other side of the image, its semiotic side, is expressed:

> through its plastic rhythm (the network of lektonic[27] elements: sounds, tone, colors, space, figures), which can come back to us from the other without response and which consequently has remained uncaptured, unsymbolized, unconsumed.[28]

While I depart from Kristeva's allegiance to the image as phantasmatic, her notion of its semiotic side is important to my analysis in Part II, as is her notion that analysts can learn from art – not just about knowledge of symptoms, but as "an essential therapeutic measure"[29] akin to analysis. She is not

talking about art therapy here, but about how viewing works of art can "enable us to establish less destructive, more pleasurable relations with ourselves and with others."[30] She states:

> As a lay discourse creating and dissolving the transferential bond, psychoanalysis is an apprenticeship in living beyond despair. It offers not a manic defence against it, but rather a receptivity to it – a way of endowing despair with meaning. By consolidating it *in the same way*, artistic creation allows the ego to assume an existence on the basis of its very vulnerability to the other [my emphasis].[31]

Kristeva's focus on how the (semiotic) signifying force of images operates at pre-linguistic levels of consciousness as rhythms and tones resonates with aspects of Jessica Benjamin's relational space of "thirdness," which I shall loosely adapt in Part II. But while for Kristeva, the affective force of images must be thought of in relation to an irrecoverable loss, in relational psychoanalytic approaches there is more of a dynamic interplay between and within oppositional states of being and non-being, presence and absence. This is not to claim that the artist/artwork is like an analyst, but rather that the spectatorial relation to images might facilitate for the viewer a space akin to a psychotherapeutic one, in which ambivalence and conflict can be safely entertained – a space that is both separate from but also linked to life outside the frame, much as the consulting room is linked to but separate from the life lived outside of it.

Part II: images as a relational space of thirdness



Jeamin Cha, *Sound Garden*, 2019. Single channel video installation, 30 minutes, color/3-channel sound. Courtesy of the artist

Adams' use of Lacan's discourse of the analyst as an interpretative framework for Kelly's *Corpus* makes a case for the dissolution of transferential demands on the artist/artwork-as-analyst. However, transference can never be absolutely dissolved, as it is an intrinsic component of all relationships. In order to avoid drowning in transference and its deadlock of complementarity – what she calls the "complementarity of doer and done to, harmer and harmed"[32] – feminist relational psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin proposes a concept of "thirdness" that, unlike the symbolic third of language which intervenes in the mother/child dyad in Freudo-Lacanian psychoanalysis, would restore "primary affectively resonant communication"[33] in the analytic setting. Premised on the "non-verbal experience of sharing a pattern, a dance, with another person [...] in the earliest exchange of gestures between mother and child,"[34] Benjamin's conception of the Third (she interchanges Third and thirdness) has to do with surrender, "a giving over to a co-created structure that transcends and absorbs individuals,"[35] She conceives of this surrender as a space of play that contains "the Either/Or poles within a larger movement."[36] Borrowing from anthropologist and cyberneticist Gregory Bateson and philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, Benjamin refers to this space of play as "'any movement' between opposites,"[37] in which the focus shifts from the individual's position to the *process* of play itself. In this process, which Benjamin likens to an intersubjective reverie,[38] phenomena such as dreams, affects, silences, and fragments of speech feedback between the analytic pair, who are submerged in a flow of self-states characterized by a "freedom from self-consciousness, effort or strain."[39] It should

not be taken that this is a harmonious space, but rather that, in what Benjamin calls the "rhythmic thirdness of resonance,"[40] the analyst does not observe from a safe distance of dissociation, but is stirred "by empathy and identification."[41] Rather than the "global psychic position of complementarity" which tends toward identifying with "one side of the doer–done to opposition, of weakness versus strength," the restoration of thirdness as reverie enables a mutual survival of destruction and acceptance of "multiple identifications."[42] It may be a bit of a leap to align this psychoanalytic approach to an encounter with Cha's *Sound Garden*, but, as a metaphor, it seems to me to relate to the oscillation of conflictual rhythms that flow between viewer and screen in a film that reflects on the contradictions of counselling and well-being in a globalized capitalist system of value. While, in the consulting room, the analyst's role is to parse the analysand's narration within their co-produced reverie, in the spectatorial space of "thirdness" such parsing is virtual, occurring only as part of a texture that incorporates viewer and screen as interrelating bodies in space. Although resolutely non-psychoanalytic, film theorist Vivian Sobchack situates the relational intersubjectivity of spectatorship as premised on "our personal embodied existence and knowledge"[43] (1992: 242). She claims that "the more dependent we are on the screen for specific knowledge of what we see in the film experience, the less likely we are to see beyond the screen's boundaries and back into our own life worlds"[44] (244). Situating the screen as an interface between on-screen bodies and voices and the viewer's psycho-phenomenological life world, I shall read *Sound Garden* as an ersatz space of "thirdness," in which the restoration of reverie induced by the film parallels the kind of "movement between opposites" suggested by Benjamin, in which disruption and repair are experienced in tandem. In relation to *Sound Garden*, a viewer might find herself moving between her own

psychic contraries and witnessing that movement without judging what is good or bad. She might become, to borrow from Lechte, "the unconscious user of images and language and their potential analyst" all at once.[45]

Sound Garden

Jeamin Cha's experimental documentary *Sound Garden* (2019) refers not to psychoanalysis, but to the psi-therapies of counselling, which generally focus on problem-solving in collaboration with clients who are seen over a short period of time, as opposed to the long-term commitment of classical psychoanalysis. In counselling, the emphasis is not on analyzing transferential relations between the analytic pair, but on redirecting thought patterns and setting up new habits to cope with psychological issues and problems. In the society of "performance and stress," counselling is offered by universities and companies to promote well-being in a context which demands instantaneous "cures" in order to return people to optimal functioning. And indeed, two of the four Korean women counsellors who Cha interviewed for her film refer to their work in these settings; the other two, respectively, working on a helpline and, as a Buddhist priest, with trade union activists and survivors of the 2014 Sewol ferry disaster. The four women's voiceover monologues intermittently punctuate the film's image track. The images continuously oscillate between mainly static camera mid-shot sequences showing cultivated trees being tended to, unearthed, or placed onto open-backed trucks, and sequences of those trucks on the motorway as they transport single trees from a horticulture center in Gangwon-do to an urban development in Seoul, where they will add "nature" to the



Jeamin Cha, *Sound Garden*, 2019. Single channel video installation, 30 minutes, color/3-channel sound. Courtesy of the artist

new apartment block. These sequences are shot both from the front and rear of a moving vehicle. They are kinetically hypnotic: both in the smooth accelerating speeds of the trucks on near-empty motorways through mountainous landscape, and in the near-abstract close-ups of motorway underpasses. Each counsellor's monologue begins during these latter passages, as if their visual diffusion were triggering the entry into speech. While each of the four critically reflect on their work and the problematic of well-being in the context of global neoliberal capitalism in South Korean institutions and ecologies, the soothing intonations of their speech exceed their critique, with their measured rhythmic pace giving the same acoustic value to criticism and advocacy. The sonic lulling and the hypnotic on-screen motion facilitates a diffuse space of listening and gazing that absorbs one in issues that, in a more didactic space, might be disavowed or denied, i.e. the mental and ecological damage wrought by global capital. Admittedly, the film's space of "reverie" will be especially different for English-speaking viewers who have to rely on and read the subtitles to understand the women's narratives, but, for me, the subtitles, which I read in my own inner voice, did not detract from the soothing effect of the women's intonations.

The women's narrations give the illusion of being spontaneous, but they derive from a more performative and collaborative process, which I suggest equally leaves affective traces on the dialogic intersubjectivity generated by the film. Creating a script from an interview with each counsellor that lasted two or three hours, Cha then worked with the women to record the voiceovers for the short film, giving them the autonomy to "perform" the parts of the script



Jeamin Cha, *Sound Garden*, 2019. Single channel video installation, 30 minutes, color/3-channel sound. Courtesy of the artist

that conveyed the essence of their stories. The result of this collaborative recording process imparts the illusion of confessional immediacy, much like Kelly's use of the first-person in her ethnographic narratives. However, both artists structure texts and voiceovers, respectively, using the narrative conventions of beginning, middle, and end. In Cha's film, each counsellor's story follows the trajectory of a shift from personal pain to awareness of the social system that partly causes and aggravates that pain. Distinguishable by subtly distinct intonations, their monologues oscillate between describing the beneficial side of counselling in both personal and professional life, and its problematic nature in being adopted/co-opted by corporations and universities to remedy dysfunctional employees and/or students suffering from mental distress, so that they can become well enough to function according to norms of productivity. Conflict is expressed between the desire to reflect on oneself and the necessity to adapt to social systems that a) actively discriminate against women/girls and make life excruciating for many, and b) only value people for their functionality in institutional and corporate life.

In the enunciative relay, the counsellor's voice I identified most with belonged to the one who worked in a university. She articulated the conflict between the quantification of care – user statistics and success rates – and students' increasingly prevalent psychological crises, which, if not directly caused by the system, are nonetheless exacerbated by its ethos of individualism, competitiveness, and scarcity (of reward). Failure to achieve success constitutes the individual as the cause of and solution to their own problems. The counsellor expresses the sense of freedom she experienced in her training, when she began to see personal issues in relation to and as stemming from the social. In interviewing the women, Cha began to realize the anti-capitalist potential of counselling, as a way to disentangle oneself from social norms and values rather

than adapting to them. The personal values the women ascribe to it, including solidarity with other women, are in excess of its commodification.[46] As well as relieving subjects from the burden of being productive according to oppressive social norms, counselling might also engender a shift toward engagement in social justice. The fourth and final counsellor describes how she became more interested in social issues as a result of her work in the Buddhist priesthood, the organization providing counselling for survivors after the catastrophic sinking of the Sewol ferry in 2014, as well as for unionized factory workers protesting labor conditions. Rather than offering counselling as a solution to the world's ills (even the Buddhist priest expresses awareness of the limits of her remit), the hypnotic reverie generated by the interplay between voice and image and between images themselves in *Sound Garden* enables the viewer *to feel through* the conflictual aspects of experience under late capitalist systems. The oscillation between states of recognition and states of diffusion facilitates a "movement between opposites," a to-ing and fro-ing in which oppositions are played with, without the pressure of having to take a side. In an aesthetic space of "thirdness," a viewer can stay with the ambivalence between damage and repair that pervades the society of "stress and performance," including for non-humans.

Sound Garden aligns the taking care of psyches with the cultivation of the trees. Two sequences documenting horticultural tree therapy, one at the beginning of the film, another later, make an emphatic link between the biopolitics of human and non-human. A tree surgeon performs the task of injecting the trees with nutritious sap and attaching IV bags of the liquid to their trunks. Reminiscent of hospital drips



Jeamin Cha, *Sound Garden*, 2019. Single channel video installation, 30 minutes, color/3-channel sound. Courtesy of the artist

attached to limbs, the trees take on the aspect of bodies in need of care and being taken care of, but only require this "unnatural" treatment because their growth is shaped to adhere to landscape gardening design principles. It is tempting to see the trees as substitutes for the fragility and resilience of the human bodies that are inferred but not visualized in the counsellors' monologues, especially as their tall trunks and foliage bob precariously from the back of transportation trucks. While the trees' cultivation is as quantified as the well-being of the counsellors' students and other clients, *Sound Garden*'s space of reverie releases the viewer from an interpretative framework that might posit the complementarity of victims who suffer and institutions that damage. While Cha meshes psychical disturbance with ecological disturbance as both necessitating treatments, these treatments also generate un-commodified values, i.e. the solace of "nature" for urban dwellers and the potential of counselling, as one of the counsellors describes it, to give "me my life back," as well as its radical potential to "shake the foundations of an individual."[47] Surrendering to the "movement between opposites" within the space of reverie involves a more or less conscious acknowledgement of the parts of the self that are complicit in structures of domination and oppression, whether as victim or perpetrator, but without solidifying those identities as either/or positionalities.[48] It enables engagement in psychological and ecological disturbance without assuming we have the power to control ecologies in which we are embedded along with multifarious non-human others, from machines and industrial processes to insects. Being able to move through and between issues without the pressure of having to take up either/or positions of complementarity may enable spectators to feel less incapacitated by feelings and thoughts of an overwhelming nature, relating as they do to threats to the ego of breakdown, extinction, and death.

Unlike Kristeva's criticism of media, including cinema,

for providing "calm [...] before images of hell," and her advocacy of an aesthetics of disjunction (Godard), which chimes with Adams' exposure of ideological signifiers of desire, in reparative critique, the maintenance of "calm" is necessary as a mechanism not only of coping with "hell" (neoliberal overproduction and extraction of material and mental resources), but of being able to think and feel through ecological and psychological disturbance without overwhelming fear or guilt. *Sound Garden* generates an intersubjective rhythmic space of "thirdness" that gently probes the ambivalence of what it is to be both beneficiaries and survivors of the damage wrought by global neoliberalism. This does not resolve personal or global problems, but in facilitating a space of reverie in which vulnerability and melancholy can be shared, films like *Sound Garden* may bolster the capacity to act in ethical ways outside the consulting or screening room

1 For key texts on this idea, see Lacan's "The Mirror-Stage as Formative of the Function of the I," in: idem, *Écrits* (New York and London: Routledge, 1980), and also his book *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (London: Penguin Books, 1991).

2 See: Jean-Louis Baudry's "Ideological effects of the basic cinematographic apparatus," in: *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970).

3 See her interview with Douglas Crimp in: Douglas Crimp, Margaret Iversen, and Homi K. Bhabha, *Mary Kelly* (London: Phaidon, 1997), 11.

4 Parveen Adams, "The Art of Analysis: Mary Kelly's *Interim* and the Discourse of the Analyst," *October* no. 58 (Autumn 1991), 81.

5 Ibid., 93.

6 Ibid., 92.

7 Lacan's four discourses articulate four different relationships to knowledge. The discourse of the master produces the subject supposed to know. The discourse of the hysteric produces the subject of uncertainty. The discourse of the university produces the subject of knowledge, while the discourse of the analyst produces the subject

beyond knowledge.

8 Adams, "The Art of Analysis," 83.

9 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003), 141.

10 Adams, "The Art of Analysis," 96.

11 Jacqueline Rose, "Sexuality in the field of vision" (1986), in: *Visual Culture: The Reader*, eds. Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall (London, California, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1999), 412.

12 Ibid., 411.

13 Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 140.

14 Mignon Nixon, "Bad Enough Mother," *October* no. 71 (Winter 1995), 91. This influential article was followed by her monograph *Fantastic Reality: Louise Bourgeois and a Story of Modern A*rt (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2005).

15 Lisa Cartwright, *Moral Spectatorship: Technologies of Voice and Affect in Postwar Representations of the Child* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 6.

16 Ibid., 18. Cartwright's emphasis on the "intersubjective mobility and material transitivity" (33) of spectatorship resonates with the relational dynamics of Benjamin's space of "thirdness" in Part II of this essay. It could be said that the turn to Kleinian and other relational models of psychoanalysis to consider spectatorship has some affinity with the more general turn to affect in film studies. While Vivian Sobchack's *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992) is often cited as a forerunner, her emphasis on the phenomenological perception of space foregrounds a real dimension to the interrelational dynamic between film as a body and the body of the spectator, which is less emphasized in subsequent literature focusing on the sensorial [Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film. Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); Jennifer Barker, *The Tactile Eye. Touch and the Cinematic Experience*. (University of California Press, 2009)].

17 Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 141.

18 It is of interest here that Silvan Tomkins, the psychologist who influenced Sedgwick's "turn" to affect, compares the affect system to the feedback system of computer networks. He uses a cybernetic metaphor to describe the complexity and motivational circulation of affect in human subjectivity. See: Cartwright, *Moral Spectatorship*, 44–45.

19 Julia Kristeva, *Intimate Revolt: The Powers and Limits of Psychoanalysis*, Vol. 2, trans. Jeanine Herman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 67. She is of course referring to the concept made famous by Guy Debord.

20 Julia Kristeva, *New Maladies of the Soul*, trans. Ross Guberman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 29.

21 Ibid., 8.

22 Kristeva, *Intimate Revolt*, 68.

23 Ibid., 79.

24 Ibid., 80.

25 John Lechte, *Genealogy and Ontology of the Western Image and its Digital Future* (New York and London: Routledge, 2021), 141.

26 Kristeva, *Intimate Revolt*, 74.

27 Lektonic signs are signs without signifiers.

28 Kristeva, *Intimate Revolt*, 77.

29 Kristeva, "On the Melancholic Imaginary," 17.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 Jessica Benjamin, *Beyond Doer and Done To: Recognition Theory, Intersubjectivity and the Third* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 224.

33 Jessica Benjamin, "Intersubjectivity, Thirdness, and Mutual Recognition," unpublished talk (Los Angeles, CA: ICA, 2007), https://terapia.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Reading-14-Jessica-Benjamin-Intersubjectivity.pdf (accessed February 24, 2023), 23.

34 Ibid., 7.

35 Benjamin, *Beyond Doer and Done To*, 170.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid., 144. Benjamin is inspired here by Gregory Bateson's model of feedback in his *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972), although her allusion to such a state of play recalls psychoanalyst and pediatrician D. W. Winnicott's notion of transitional space.

38 Note that Benjamin, distinguishing her notion of play from Winnicott's, substitutes the term "reverie" for play (162).

39 Ibid., 170. Benjamin is borrowing here from Gadamer.

40 Ibid., 238.

41 Ibid., 227.

42 Ibid. Benjamin's model of mutuality (of pleasure and destruction) in asymmetrical relationships is premised on the mother/child relation, see: *Beyond Doer and Done To*, 103.

43 Sobchak, *The Address of the Eye*, 242.

44 Ibid., 244.

45 Lechte, *Genealogy and Ontology of the Western Image*, 175.

46 In Niels Niessen's critique of mindfulness discourses and practices, "for their ideology of a centered, *lovingkind* individual whose attention remains unperturbed by the economic seasons" [emphasis in original], he makes the added argument that their emphasis on attention can, nonetheless, be used to redraw boundaries between work and leisure, thereby providing protection from the colonization of the mind in neoliberal capitalism. See: idem, "*Mad Men* and Mindfulness," *Discourse* vol. 40, no. 3 (2018), 273–307: 275.

47 These lines are taken from *Sound Garden*'s script.

48 As the theme of this special issue is "Visualizing Psychoanalysis," I have focused on psychoanalytic theoretical models for conceiving of how a space of reverie in moving image art might enable the undoing of oppositional identity positions. However, my use of Benjamin here relates to Michael Rothberg's non-psychoanalytic concept of the implicated spectator in: *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators* (California: Stanford University Press, 2019). While his goal is to address the legacies of violent global histories, he also proffers the concept of the implicated spectator to conceptualize "the socio-political dynamics that create suffering and inequality in the

present" (11). Much as Benjamin's aim is to get beyond the binds of complementarity, Rothberg's is to overcome the "denial and defensiveness" that might result from a conscious or unconscious sense of complicity and/or guilt in relation to the oppositional subject positions of perpetrator and victim. While Rothberg's application of the concept of the implicated spectator to artist filmmakers such as William Kentridge and Hito Steyerl is beyond the scope of this article, his exploration of their use of multi-directional temporalities of remembrance to undo that oppositional binary compounds the idea that an aesthetics of "thirdness" might have social purchase.

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